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ABSTRACT

This state education plan is designed to improve the effectiveness and quality of the educational experiences of all students in Minnesota. Across-the-board improvements and major reforms in policies, programs, and practices are needed to restructure the way schools operate, children are taught, and parents and community members are involved in planning and decision-making. The following goals are outlined: (1) to guarantee that all children will enter school ready to learn, with families prepared to fully support and participate in their children's learning; (2) to restructure schools to improve the educational climate for learning; (3) to create comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services for all learners; (4) to assure that all elementary and secondary students will develop the skills for lifelong learning and productive citizenship; and (5) to provide adults with education opportunities leading to literacy and economic independence. (FMW)

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CHALLENGE 2000

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CHALLENGE 2000:

SUCCESS FOR ALL LEARNERS

Minnesota Department of Education
December 1990

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Being the new Commissioner, I welcome the opportunity to lead the policy development to carry out the recommendations in "Challenge 2000." I strongly support transforming education to focus on individual learners of all ages. We must collaborate with the community to remove barriers to learning so all learners will be successful.

Gene Mammenga
Commissioner Elect
Minnesota Department of Education
January 3, 1991

FOREWORD

The challenges confronting today's schools are immense. Increased economic competition from abroad requires that all our citizens achieve higher levels of competency, at the same time that changes in our society at home put more and more of our learners at risk. Now more than ever it is imperative that we create a public education system in which all learners succeed.

That is the aim of the plan outlined in this report -- to lift ALL learners to higher levels of achievement. Over the past decade or so the climate for learning in Minnesota has changed. Problems like poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, racial unrest, family violence, and teenage pregnancy have all found their way into classrooms. Increasing numbers of students -- from cities, suburbs, and rural areas -- bring with them baggage that blocks the doorway to learning. The school's responsibility has therefore changed: we must not only provide opportunities for learning, but assist in the removal of barriers as well.

Our schools must be transformed into caring, nurturing places that address the needs of the whole child. They need to work in closer partnership with parents, other agencies, businesses, and the community at large in order to address these broader needs effectively. And they need to become more responsive to the tremendous diversity of student abilities, backgrounds, needs, and learning styles. No two children learn the same way ... they cannot be taught the same way either. That means the venerable factory model of education has got to go.

This report outlines goals, strategies, and recommendations designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of our public schools. Central to its approach is a comprehensive early prevention and risk reduction plan. In this wave of educational reform, as we push for excellence, we cannot afford throwaways.

This report represents the culmination of discussions and meetings conducted throughout Minnesota during the past year with students, families, educational leaders, local school district representatives, and state health and social service professionals. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support as well as the sense of urgency conveyed by these groups.

Challenge 2000 is intended to be the banner of Minnesota's comprehensive effort to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational experiences for all our citizens. The future stability and well-being of our public education system -- in which we all take considerable pride -- depends on how well and with what sense of priority we address the improvements needed in classrooms and communities statewide. Our state's future is directly tied to the quality of education of its people. Education must be our number one priority.

Tom Nelson

Tom Nelson, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Education

Tom Lindquist

Tom Lindquist, President
State Board of Education

CHALLENGE 2000

Success For All Learners

Challenge 2000 is intended to be the banner of a comprehensive state education action plan. The goal is to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational experiences for all learners in Minnesota. The improvements called for will require that we go far beyond simply fine-tuning existing programs and services. Across-the-board improvements and major reforms in our policies, programs, and practices are needed.

The size and scale of the proposed improvements outlined in this report will require the educational system to reach out and involve others in the process of change. Statewide, educators will need to work in close cooperation with parents and communities; early childhood, health, social service, mental health, welfare, corrections and law enforcement agencies; business and industry; and public and private colleges and universities. The future stability and well-being of our educational system depends now on how well, and with what sense of priority, the improvements needed in classrooms and communities statewide are addressed.

Guarantee that all children in Minnesota will enter school ready to learn, with families prepared to fully support and participate in their children's learning.

The early childhood years (birth to age 5) are a critical period of growth and development. Learning is a cumulative process that begins with a healthy, nurturing, and secure start in life. When these needs go unmet, serious problems occur. During adolescence, these children are more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school, need special education services, become teen parents, and are many times more likely to abuse drugs and engage in criminal activities. Even though Minnesota is recognized as a national leader in early childhood education, much work remains to reach every eligible child and family with the programs and services that fully meet their health and developmental needs.

CHALLENGE

Empower parents to fully support and participate in their children's learning and development.

CHALLENGE

Guarantee early childhood services for all three- and four-year-olds in Minnesota.

CHALLENGE

Promote a comprehensive statewide system of health services for young children.

Restructure schools to improve the educational climate for learning.

School restructuring must evolve from the rich foundation and traditions of educational excellence for which Minnesota has become recognized nationally. Minnesota's educational reforms currently focus on strategies for encouraging change within schools by providing parents, students, teachers and community members greater authority over school programs and services. Minnesota policies include: outcome-based learning, student and family choice in determining educational options, improvement of schools through the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP), and promotion of lifelong learning. These policies presently serve as the foundation of Minnesota's educational system. School restructuring is needed to translate these policies into action at the local level.

CHALLENGE

Give educators, parents, and community members the encouragement, flexibility, and support needed to improve their schools.

CHALLENGE

Restructure the school day and school calendar to meet students' and family needs for the 21st Century.

CHALLENGE

Invest the resources needed for all students to succeed.

CHALLENGE

Evolve efficient and equitable support structures for public education.

CHALLENGE

Ensure that professional development is a priority in all of Minnesota's schools.

CHALLENGE

Revitalize teacher training programs in Minnesota's colleges and universities.

CHALLENGE

Review the roles of the Minnesota Department of Education, the State Board of Education and the Board of Teaching to support the restructuring of local educational programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Create comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services for all learners.

Comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services must be a priority if education reform is to be successful. Many Minnesota children and youth come to school each day with personal, family, and social problems that interfere with learning, school attendance, progress toward graduation, and future employability. The problems these young people face are frequently multifaceted and inter-related.

Educators will need to reach out and collaborate with the larger network of community service agencies to address these needs effectively.

CHALLENGE

Make available programs and services that promote the social, emotional and physical development of children and youth.

CHALLENGE

Improve collaboration inside and outside of education to ensure that students receive help with health, social, and emotional problems that interfere with learning.

Assure that all K-12 students will develop the skills for lifelong learning and productive citizenship.

A strong educational foundation begins in early childhood and must be complemented by responsive elementary and secondary educational programs. Minnesota's focus on school reform must be centered on the school, family and community experiences of all citizens, from birth through their adult years. Steps to improve Minnesota's elementary and secondary education programs must be conceived and grounded in the best of what we know about effective schools and our commitment to change must be long-term.

CHALLENGE

Promote a comprehensive system of outcome-based education in all of Minnesota's schools.

CHALLENGE

Develop varied and flexible interdisciplinary and cooperative instructional strategies that address the diversity of individual student learning needs.

CHALLENGE

Promote responsible citizenship through experiential learning opportunities in all neighborhoods and communities in Minnesota.

CHALLENGE

Provide students increased options in choosing when, where, and how they learn, in order to increase Minnesota's high school graduation rate.

CHALLENGE

Improve the school to adult life transition for all our youth.

Provide adults with educational opportunities which lead to literacy and economic independence.

It is estimated that 355,000 Minnesotans between the ages of 18 and 64 have not yet completed high school. Another 200,000 of adult Minnesotans who have graduated from high school are estimated to have basic skills below the eighth grade level. Comprehensive programs must be available for adults to improve their literacy skills, train for new careers, and retrain to meet new skill demands.

CHALLENGE

Meet the educational needs of a diverse adult population, regardless of age, national origin, or prior educational level.

CHALLENGE

Improve participation of adults of color, immigrants, and persons with disabilities in adult education and lifelong learning programs in Minnesota.

CONCLUSION

Challenge 2000 is a vision of change for the 21st century and beyond. The vision conveyed in this report calls for a fundamental restructuring of the way in which schools are operated, young people are taught, and parents and community members become actively involved in educational planning and decision making. We have reached a critical point where public education must come to grips with the realization that far too many of our young people are not faring well in our schools. We must revitalize the power of education by fostering a statewide educational environment in which all students succeed. The door to every child's future success and prosperity is first and foremost the door to the schoolhouse. The way must be paved with responsive education policies and programs, and we must act now.

NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

During September 1989, President Bush and members of the National Governors' Association held the first national summit on education and declared, "the time has come, for the first time in U.S. history, to establish clear, national performance goals -- goals that will make us internationally competitive." On February 25, 1990, six national education goals were adopted by the National Governors' Association:

GOAL ONE

By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

GOAL TWO

By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

GOAL THREE

By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

GOAL FOUR

By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

GOAL FIVE

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

GOAL SIX

By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

MINNESOTA EDUCATION GOALS

The national goals for education provide a logical and important direction for shaping new Minnesota education policies. The goals developed for Minnesota mirror the national goals and reflect the progress we have made and the next steps that need to be taken. The goals and objectives build upon Minnesota's long-standing traditions and nationally recognized leadership for educational excellence and innovation. We take pride in these accomplishments and our statewide commitment to education. It is from this foundation that we move forward, firmly convinced that the goals and objectives identified in this document can be fully achieved and produce a statewide education environment that promotes lifelong learning and success for all students.

GOAL ONE

Guarantee that all children in Minnesota will enter school ready to learn, with families prepared to fully support and participate in their children's learning.

GOAL TWO

Restructure schools to improve the educational climate for learning.

GOAL THREE

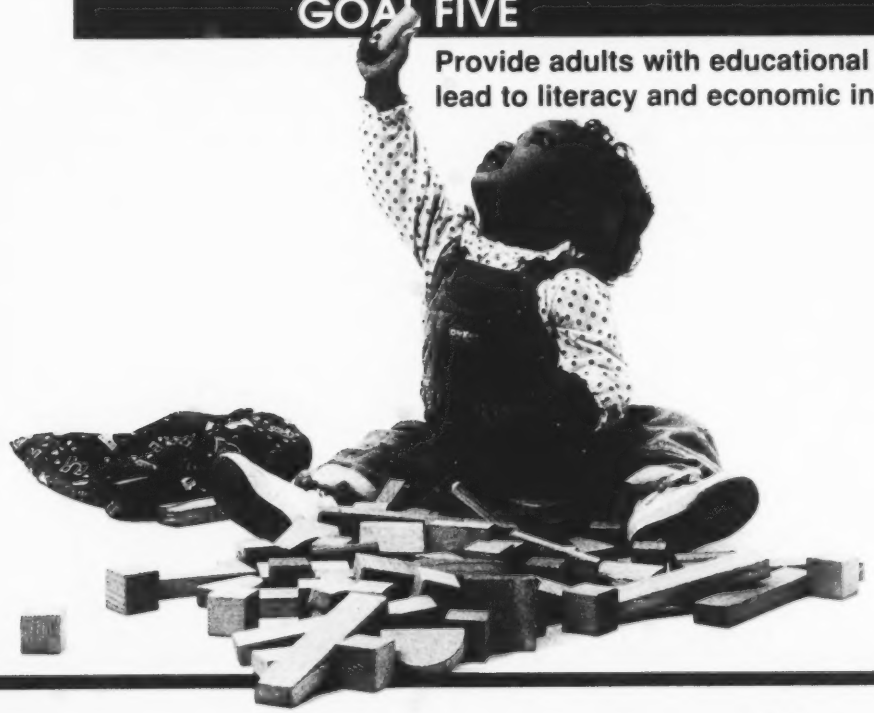
Create comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services for all learners.

GOAL FOUR

Assure that all K-12 students will develop the skills for lifelong learning and productive citizenship.

GOAL FIVE

Provide adults with educational opportunities which lead to literacy and economic independence.



CHALLENGE 2000

Challenge 2000 is intended to be the banner of a comprehensive state education action plan. The goal is to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational experiences for all learners in Minnesota. The improvements called for will require that we go far beyond simply fine-tuning existing programs and services. Across-the-board improvements and major reforms in our policies, programs, and practices are needed. In fact, the very foundation and structure of education must be changed, and a new and more responsive system envisioned for the 21st century.

Policymakers, professionals, and the general public must understand that many of the identified difficulties in public education today are due, in large part, to social problems and conditions present in our communities statewide. Poverty, homelessness, child abuse, racial tensions, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancies are just a few signals of problems that result in poor school performance and must be addressed immediately. A commonly posed question is, "But why is public education expanding its role into the health and social concerns of students and families?" Years ago, schools were expected to stay out of certain family, societal and moral issues. The role of public education was primarily that of teaching the "basics." This was possible then because schools were expected to educate primarily those young people without personal or societal barriers to learning.

Today, public education is increasingly expected to "find a way" to educate all learners. In doing so, educators are required to reach out beyond the school door to establish partnerships with families and community service agencies. Changes in society and in people's expectations have broadened the goals of public education to meet a much wider range of individual and societal needs than ever before. To help young people become all they can be, educators need to address educational, economic, social and health needs simultaneously. This must be done through strong collaborative partnerships between schools, families, businesses and community agencies.

The size and scale of the proposed improvements outlined in this report will require the educational system to reach out and involve others in the process of change. Statewide, educators will need to work in close cooperation with parents and communities; early childhood, health, social service, mental health, welfare, corrections and law enforcement agencies; business and industry; and public and private colleges and universities. The future stability and well-being of our educational system -- a system in which we take considerable pride as citizens -- depends now on how well and with what sense of priority the improvements needed in classrooms and communities statewide are addressed.

GOAL ONE

Early Childhood Years

Guarantee that all children in Minnesota will enter school ready to learn, with families prepared to fully support and participate in their children's learning.

The early childhood years (birth to age 5) are a critical period of growth and development. Learning is a cumulative process that begins with a healthy, nurturing, and secure start in life. When these needs go unmet, serious problems occur. During adolescence, these children are more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school, need special education services, become teen parents, and are many times more likely to abuse drugs and engage in criminal activities.

Even though Minnesota is recognized as a national leader in early childhood education, much work remains to reach every eligible child and family with the programs and services that fully meet their health and developmental needs.

CHALLENGE:

Empower parents to fully support and participate in their children's learning and development.

Parents have the most powerful influence on children so participation in their children's education is essential. Children today come from family situations and circumstances far more diverse than in years past. These differing patterns of home life among children require educators to consider new approaches when encouraging parents and primary caregivers to become actively involved in education.

1. Establish comprehensive and accessible community parent resource centers statewide.

"One-stop" community parent resource centers are viewed as one of the most effective and meaningful ways to connect parents to the information necessary for them to become active participants in educational planning and decision making. These centers should be located in all neighborhoods and communities statewide to give parents or caregivers ready access to resources and individual help. Centers should be encouraged to co-locate with community social and health services. Co-location can improve parent access to health and social service professionals.

2. Expand Early Childhood Family Education.

Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education program is designed to provide education and support to all parents of young children from birth through age 5. All parents are eligible. Early Childhood Family Education programs serve a cross section of the community, helping parents to build their own support networks and sense of community while learning how to support their child's learning and development. Many programs have waiting lists. Early Childhood Family Education funding should be increased to meet the needs of unserved and underserved families.

3. Increase the availability of safe, accessible, and affordable child care for parents and guardians.

Child care services are presently not affordable or accessible to many Minnesota families. Available services meet only a fraction of the total need for child care in Minnesota. Minnesota's education community can play a role by expanding school age child care programs and Early Childhood Family Education services. Schools should extend their operating hours so parents who work during the early part of the morning, late afternoons, or evenings are better accommodated.

4. Provide parenting education to all Minnesota high school students.

Young people need to be ready for the experience of parenthood by having an understanding of the fundamentals of child development, good nutrition and health practices, child rearing and discipline, and other aspects of parenting. All Minnesota high school students should receive information and training on parenting as part of a comprehensive education program.

CHALLENGE:

Guarantee early childhood services for all three- and four–year–olds in Minnesota.

A major commitment — shared by state, county, and local governments, parents, educators, and business leaders — will be required if all Minnesota children are to enter school ready to learn. Several early childhood programs and services are currently available within Minnesota. These include Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education programs, Interagency Early Intervention Services, Way to Grow, and a number of privately operated preschool programs. The availability of these early childhood programs is limited, however, and many children in need are not receiving them.

5. Develop an appropriate array of early childhood programs and services for all three- and four–year–olds to give parents meaningful choices.

A "cafeteria–style" approach that gives parents meaningful choices and opportunities to select from a wide-range of educational, social, and health services is required. A comprehensive range of options would include special education services, Early Childhood Family Education, Head Start, Way to Grow, public and private preschools, full–day child care, family literacy programs, public health and mental health services, counseling and other assistance. The range of service options and choices should be comprehensive and vary in intensity and scope to match the needs and situations of different families.

6. Expand Head Start.

The federal government's Head Start program attempts to compensate for the many disadvantages experienced by children in poverty. Head Start programs are targeted in Minnesota to 3- to 5–year–old children and their families. Increased funding of this program would substantially contribute to the base of program options critically needed.

7. Establish partnerships among early childhood programs to ensure all kindergartners an equal start in school.

Public schools should work cooperatively to develop close partnerships with Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education, Interagency Early Intervention Services, and other early childhood and kindergarten programs to ensure the continuity needed during a child's transition between these services.

CHALLENGE:

Promote a comprehensive statewide system of health services for young children.

A sound education prevention policy begins by giving every infant a healthy start in life. If every pregnant woman in Minnesota were to receive early and continuous prenatal care, birth outcomes and life prospects would be dramatically improved for many children now born at-risk. For children in their infancy and early years, screening for health and developmental problems is another important preventative measure. Health, developmental, and emotional problems detected at an early age can, in many cases, be corrected to improve their readiness for school. Untreated problems such as vision, hearing, and physical and developmental conditions can impair a child's learning and development throughout life.

8. Ensure that all pregnant teens and other high-risk expectant mothers have prenatal health care.

Prenatal care services need to be readily accessible and affordable, and must be perceived by young women as meeting their specific needs. Early and continuing maternity care, especially physician visits initiated during the first trimester of pregnancy, is essential and directly related to the development of a healthy child and school readiness.

9. Maintain access to health care through Minnesota's Children's Health Plan.

Families in Minnesota with income below 185 percent of the poverty level, and who would not otherwise have access to primary and preventive health care services for their children, are eligible to enroll in this supplemental insurance program. In order to ensure that all children in Minnesota have access to quality health care services, the Legislature must maintain adequate funding for this program.

10. Ensure that all young children receive comprehensive health and developmental screening.

Effective health and developmental screening services provided by school districts are cooperatively planned and implemented with education, health, and social service agencies. Currently, early childhood screening is available for children with disabilities, birth through age three in Minnesota. Guaranteeing health and developmental screening, including referral and follow-up for all 3-year-olds is an important component in a comprehensive school readiness strategy for Minnesota. Minnesota state and local education, health, and social service agencies should cooperatively plan public education and awareness strategies that convey information on the statewide availability of screening services and the availability of Minnesota's Children's Health Plan. Strategies need to address hard-to-reach low income and non-English speaking groups.

CLYDE

GOAL TWO

Making Minnesota Schools More Responsive

Restructure schools to improve the educational climate for learning.

School restructuring must evolve from the rich foundation and traditions of educational excellence for which Minnesota has become recognized nationally. Minnesota's educational reforms currently focus on strategies for encouraging change within schools by providing parents, students, teachers and community members greater authority over school programs and services. Minnesota policies include: outcome-based learning, student and family choice in determining educational options, improvement of schools through the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP), and promotion of lifelong learning. These policies presently serve as the foundation of Minnesota's educational system. School restructuring is needed to translate these policies into action at the local level.

CHALLENGE:

Give educators, parents, and community members the encouragement, flexibility, and support needed to improve their schools.

To bring about needed improvements schools must have flexibility in the development of programs, and use of people, time, and resources. Schools must be given the tools and administrative go-ahead to engage parents and other community members in planning and decision making at the school site.

11. Decentralize authority and support school site planning and decision making.

Local school boards are in a unique position to facilitate and promote school restructuring through school-based management. This does not mean giving up total control or decision making authority. The Minnesota School Boards Association and local school boards should give educators, parents, and community members the encouragement, flexibility, and tools needed to plan and improve educational programs at the school building level.

12. Permit Charter schools that expand choice opportunities.

Education by Charter is increasing in popularity as a model for restructuring schools. The goal of a Charter school is to promote long-term improvements in educational programs through agreements developed between educators, school boards, and administrators. The Legislature is encouraged to permit educators to establish Charters as a useful model for restructuring and improving schools.

13. Empower parents to become active participants in strengthening schools.

Empowering parents to get involved is an important and necessary goal. Part of empowering people -- parents and caregivers -- is to first believe in them and their capacities to get involved. We need to ask ourselves: How welcome do we make parents in our schools and classrooms? What role have we created for them -- and, have we bothered to inform them of what their role is or should be? And, have we made it convenient for them to access and communicate with teachers and other school staff? Schools must be more accessible, give parents a meaningful role, and foster a sense of partnership.

CHALLENGE:

Restructure the school day and school calendar to meet students' and family needs for the 21st century.

Despite interest in raising student achievement levels, the United States still maintains a shorter school year than any industrial nation in the world. In Minnesota, the nine-month agricultural season continues to govern school schedules. Educators and parents readily admit that many students forget much of what they have learned over the summer. Students who experienced academic difficulties during the school year may be more adversely affected by idle summer days.

During the school year, many young children spend long hours at home without adult supervision. The school day is shorter than the parents' work day, but many working parents cannot afford after school child care. Consequently, we are creating a generation of "latch-key" children, who remain home behind locked doors until parents return from work. Others "hang out" with peers in shopping malls, parks, and downtown areas. This, too, is an unstable and potentially hazardous situation for many children and youth in Minnesota.

14. Provide options and incentives to educational programs to establish year-round, 12-month service schedules, including weekends and evenings.

Local school boards, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota State Legislature, need to explore options for establishing year-round school calendars and extended day and evening programs. A reasonable first step is to establish optional after-school educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. The second step is to make available summer school programs which broaden a child's life experiences and opportunities for active learning. Vocational education and summer youth employment programs are also in need of expansion. Many after-school and summer school programs can be planned, cost-shared, and operated collaboratively by schools, park boards, community centers, civic and social organizations, and parents. The third step will be to establish a year-round school calendar.

15. Expand extended day, year-round child care services.

School Age Child Care/Extended Day programs in 130 public school districts offer enrichment and recreation opportunities for children from kindergarten through early elementary grades before and after school and during school vacation times. These programs need to be expanded to all school districts. In addition, extended day programs should be designed to meet the different needs of middle school and junior high youth.

16. Promote the concept of "community schools."

Schools must be taken into the community, and the community brought into the school. The role of Community Education is of primary importance in accomplishing this objective. School buildings should be open throughout the day, evenings and weekends, and available for many uses by school staff and community members. Community education programs statewide are urged to work closely with other local organizations and groups in promoting community-school partnerships.

CHALLENGE:

Invest the resources needed for all students to succeed.

Minnesota has made significant investments in public education. We must continue to make education a priority and invest the resources needed to achieve the broad goal of "success for all learners" in Minnesota. We can choose to pay now or pay more later. Failure to make this investment today means that Minnesota and its children and families will pay a high price for the long-term costs of school failure, unemployment, welfare dependency, crime, and drug and alcohol abuse. These costs can be avoided by initial investments in prevention services and by planned efforts to improve existing school programs and services. It is important to identify the range of possible funding alternatives available. We must seek the most cost-effective and equitable approaches in funding educational programs and services in Minnesota.

17. Redirect existing resources to school improvement activities.

The Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota State Legislature must carefully review the current funding system for public education. Reducing financing for cumbersome and top-heavy central administrative structures is a reasonable and potentially cost-effective course of action. Directing more program and budgetary responsibility to the schools themselves will help make it practical to reduce the size of central administrative offices. Other creative ways to save costs can come from teachers and principals directly. At the building level, team-teaching, cooperative learning, differentiated staffing and other instructional approaches may actually save money. More effective teaching models and strategies may also reduce costly referrals to Chapter I, special education and other categorical programs. The use of community volunteers, including the increasing numbers of retirees, and business and industry participation with schools will help as well. Financial incentives that reward schools for good performance are also needed. Through these and other potential strategies, enormous cost savings can be recognized in the long run.

18. Promote cost-effective service delivery approaches through interagency cooperation.

Interagency cooperation must be viewed as the means for improving not only the availability of services, but also a method for achieving more cost-effective programs. When the costs for these programs and services are shared among agencies, the total cost to any one agency is reduced.

19. Expand volunteerism in public education.

Enlisting community volunteers and strengthening local business and industry partnerships can go a long way in adding support for school programs and services. Parents, business representatives, retirees, and other community members can support instructional programs, serve as student mentors, deliver instruction, and provide exploratory experiences in the community.

20. Promote changes that create a more equitable system of school funding.

Discrepancies in per-pupil expenditures continue to exist among school districts throughout Minnesota, principally due to inequities in the property tax base and levy limits allowable under current Minnesota statutes. Many districts lack the resources to enable all students to take part in enriched curriculum options and extracurricular activities. We must re-evaluate Minnesota's school finance policies to create a more equitable funding base for all of Minnesota's public schools.

21. Target new funding to the development of innovative and cost-effective programs and reward schools for positive results.

Traditionally, Minnesota legislators have been stalwart providers of needed increases in funding for public education. Continuing to improve Minnesota's public education will require sustained funding over the next decade and beyond. A careful plan and a range of strategies for funding education programs is needed. Sequentially phased-in funding, special incentive funding to reward schools for developing innovative approaches for children and youth at risk, and demonstration grant funds targeted to the development of collaborative and cost-effective programs are plausible considerations. The Minnesota State Legislature should consider these and other fiscal strategies.

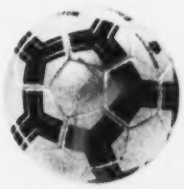
CHALLENGE:

Evolve efficient and equitable support structures for public education.

Over the years, Minnesota has evolved a comprehensive system of multi-district and regional service programs. Multi-district cooperatives, for example, have been formed to share costs in delivering special education, vocational education, and other educational programs. Large regional service structures have also evolved. A more recent development has been the formation of education districts. Several small to mid-size school districts typically form education districts where joint decision making powers and a pooling of resources is undertaken to improve the availability of services within regions of the state.

22. Give schools choices and decision making in their participation in multi-district and regional service programs.

We urge the Minnesota State legislature, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Education, to undertake a review of the effectiveness and accountability of multi-district and regional structures and phase out ineffective and costly systems. We further recommend that school district participation in all multi-district cooperatives and regional service delivery structures be voluntary, and participation, if desired, be based on local need and choice of options. These systems must survive on merit, not on mandate. They should be judged solely on their capacity to deliver appropriate services that are relevant and valued by school professionals, parents, and students.



CHALLENGE:

Ensure that professional development is a priority in all of Minnesota's schools.

The Minnesota Department of Education and local school districts must commit the resources and make available incentives and opportunities for educators and other professional staff to engage in comprehensive staff development activities. Teachers must have a voice in decisions regarding staff development programs. If the locus of change is placed at the school building level, then staff development must be focused more directly in the school. Individual schools should have the responsibility for determining staff development needs, planning teacher development programs, and controlling their staff development budgets.

23. Restructure professional development programs.

Professional development must take on a new direction in Minnesota. We need to create opportunities for teachers to learn from one another, solve common problems collegially, develop cooperative and interdisciplinary teaching approaches, and have access to information and resources on exemplary teaching practices. University courses need to be brought into schools, where teachers and university faculty can mutually work on classroom improvements. We urge local school districts to work closely with teachers in broadening the range of professional development approaches and opportunities.

24. Encourage leadership training.

Professional development and training for school boards, superintendents, principals, parents, teachers and other educational leadership personnel also should be undertaken. The effectiveness of efforts to restructure educational programs statewide will depend, to a large extent, on the leadership skills and administrative capabilities of these staff.

CHALLENGE:

Revitalize teacher training programs in Minnesota's colleges and universities.

Minnesota's public and private colleges and universities are among the finest in the nation. Schools must be able to draw upon these excellent resources in a variety of ways for improving our educational system.

25. Improve the connection between teacher training programs and schools.

We encourage Minnesota's institutions of higher education to strengthen continuing education programs through the adoption of innovative approaches. The Minnesota Department of Education should establish a joint task force with institutions of higher education and other professional groups to make recommendations on ways to improve the connection between teacher training programs and schools.

26. Recruit and retain minority candidates into teaching.

Presently, minorities are underrepresented in our teaching ranks. We recommend that the Minnesota Legislature, in cooperation with institutions of higher education, develop incentives to encourage members of racial/ethnic groups to seek careers in teaching. Attention must also be given to sustaining their continued employment and promotion.

27. Create training opportunities for paraprofessionals.

Minnesota must expand efforts to train paraprofessionals. As teachers begin to develop new instructional designs, differentiated teaching models, and undertake efforts to reduce

teacher-student ratios, paraprofessionals should play a larger role in schools and classrooms. Training opportunities can be made available in local school districts. In addition, we encourage Minnesota's community college and technical college system to explore opportunities for establishing training programs for paraprofessionals statewide with the Minnesota Department of Education.

CHALLENGE:

Review the roles of the Minnesota Department of Education, the State Board of Education and the Board of Teaching to support the restructuring of local educational programs.

As school restructuring proceeds in Minnesota, student, program, and fiscal accountability systems will need to shift more and more to the local school district level. This shift will provide an opportunity for the Minnesota Department of Education to focus on the implementation and evaluation of its outcome-based education system, graduation requirements; and statewide assessment procedures as well as to provide support and technical assistance to local educational programs. The State Board of Education and Board of Teaching should also review their role in view of proposed school restructuring activities. These state-level governance bodies must evolve consistent perspectives and supportive policies that promote greater authority over decision making in local school districts.

28. Review internal staff roles and functions to create a responsive state system of support and assistance to local programs.

The roles and functions of state education agency personnel must be systematically reviewed to ensure that current staff functions are consistent with statewide efforts to improve and restructure educational programs. The Minnesota Department of Education will need to promote coordination and collaboration among its own divisions and sections. Department staff must work together to streamline procedures and eliminate or reduce unnecessary compliance and reporting requirements.

29. Revise current licensure rules to create flexibility in staffing.

Minnesota's teacher licensing rules currently prevent local flexibility in the hiring and assigning of teachers across programs. Rigidity in licensing makes it difficult for principals to assign teachers flexibly in attempting to meet diverse student learning needs. There are also few opportunities for schools to use non-licensed professionals in classrooms. We recommend that the State Board of Teaching review current licensure standards and rules to give local districts more flexibility in hiring qualified and competent professionals for teaching positions.

30. Promote an inclusive educational system responsive to the needs of all learners.

For over two decades, federal and state legislation has been enacted to expand educational opportunities to children, youth and adults with disabilities, economically and academically disadvantaged students and other groups. The evolution of such services as Chapter I, special education, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) services are products of these legislative achievements. Yet, along with the obvious benefits of these programs have come substantial monitoring and compliance reporting requirements. Unfortunately, these requirements have, in some cases, inhibited the development of cooperative and collaborative programs at the local level.

Reducing rigid policies and regulations to promote integrated and collaborative teaching approaches would enable Minnesota to create a more inclusive educational system responsive to all students. In moving forward with this objective, we fully recognize the importance of preserving procedural safeguards for children and youth served in categorical programs. The educational rights of these young people must be protected and their entitlements to public education fully guaranteed. But we believe local school districts need to assume more ownership for categorical services. Steps must be taken to remove procedural and regulatory barriers that limit schools from developing inclusive and integrated approaches to learning for all students.

GOAL THREE

Directions in Prevention and Risk Reduction

Create comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services for all learners.

Comprehensive prevention and risk reduction services must be a priority if education reform is to be successful. Many Minnesota children and youth come to school each day with personal, family, and social problems that interfere with learning, school attendance, progress toward graduation, and future employability. The problems these young people face are frequently multifaceted and inter-related. Simply put, problems tend to come in packages.

It is important to acknowledge that the serious problems experienced by young people do not always result in dropping out. When risk conditions are present, however, a child's learning may be impeded and potential for success diminished. Sometimes this can mean the difference between receiving an "A" or "C" in a school course, participating in a desired extracurricular activity, or even going on to college. These personal and academic limitations are also part of what it means to be at risk and must be addressed.

We must also realize that the multiple problems of children, youth, and their families cannot be fully addressed or resolved by the educational system alone. Educators will need to reach out and collaborate with the larger network of community service agencies to address these needs effectively. Collaboration will require education and community service agencies to establish joint goals and actions, and pool resources to effectively serve our young people and their parents. A belief in this basic principle is a significant first step toward developing a responsive system in which all learners can and will succeed.

CHALLENGE:

Make available programs and services that promote the social, emotional and physical development of children and youth.

The cumulative effects of low achievement, unhealthy and unsafe environments, poor nutrition, and unsound health practices have a profoundly detrimental impact on students' learning. Research shows that serious problems in personal and school adjustment are strongly related to the early onset of abuse of alcohol or other drugs, dropping out, and teenage pregnancy. Many children and adolescents in our schools are under enormous stress, exacerbated by difficulties at home and in school. Community-based services and case management are in short supply, and coordination of mental health programs with educational and other community social service programs is inadequate. The kids needing these services are "our kids" as much as the mental health system's. So those of us in education must assist in improving the quality, availability, and the coordination of mental health and other social service programs for students.

31. Expand counseling services in Minnesota's public schools.

Increased financial support for counselors, nurses, social workers, drug counselors, and other professionals is critically needed to expand mental health prevention and intervention services. We should focus these efforts in the elementary grades. We strongly encourage the Minnesota Legislature to consider proposals to expand funding options to include counseling services for young people at risk in Minnesota.

32. Expand mental health prevention, identification, and intervention services through active collaboration between education and community service agencies.

Ongoing collaboration among education, social, and mental health

agencies is critically needed in the expansion of mental health prevention and intervention services. We urge the Minnesota Legislature to encourage school districts to plan cooperatively and co-fund expansions of mental health and social services to children and youth at risk statewide. Further, incentive funds for school districts to work cooperatively with social service agencies in meeting the health, social, and mental health needs of young people are needed.

CHALLENGE:

Improve collaboration inside and outside of education to ensure that students receive help with health, social, and emotional problems that interfere with learning.

In most schools, the present demand for student support services far exceeds the availability. Many students receive health care, psychological counseling, treatment, and other services from professionals outside the school. Others receive no services at all. Educational and social service agencies should coordinate programs and collaborate in delivering health, social, and other services that support students and their families.

33. Welcome other professionals and community service programs to the school as full partners in working with students.

Improved collaboration among schools and community service agencies is urgently needed. Far too often students and their families fail to connect with community health, mental health, and social service programs. Case management or follow-up services are inadequate and fragmented across agencies in the community. Negotiating the maze of community services is time-consuming and frustrating for students and parents. Co-locating health, mental health, and social services at or near the school where they are most likely to be used by students would be an important step toward improving the delivery of these services. We encourage local school boards and superintendents to make office space available in schools and to invite social service agencies to schedule office hours at convenient times of the day in school facilities. Cooperatively planned and co-funded services could go a long way to reduce duplication of services and lower costs.

34. Encourage greater parental involvement in planning educational and support services for their children.

As education and human service agencies provide more and more support to students and their families, it is important for families to become more involved in the decision-making process. Working parents need opportunities to meet with school staff at convenient times of the day, outside of work hours. For those students receiving multiple services from schools and community health and social service agencies, efforts to conduct joint multidisciplinary meetings among education and community service professionals and parents are encouraged.

35. Encourage the sharing of information among collaborating agencies on a need-to-know basis that maintains confidentiality.

As schools and social service agencies convene to discuss collaborative approaches in the delivery of services, ways to improve the exchange of essential information must be found. Parents and caregivers must also be actively involved in such discussions to make their preferences known. One way to overcome this barrier is to co-fund liaison positions between education and community service agencies. Another way is to encourage individuals to give consent for information to be shared between agencies.

GOAL FOUR

The School Years

Assure that all K–12 students will develop the skills for lifelong learning and productive citizenship.

A strong educational foundation begins in early childhood and must be complemented by responsive elementary and secondary educational programs. Since the mid–1980s, national education policies and suggested reforms have focused primarily on increasing academic standards and graduation requirements among high school students. Research has shown, however, that as early as the third grade, factors such as low achievement, truancy, and discipline problems are strong predictors of future school performance and dropout problems. Minnesota's focus on school reform must be centered on the school, family and community experiences of all citizens, from birth through their adult years. Steps to improve Minnesota's elementary and secondary education programs must be conceived and grounded in the best of what we know about effective schools and our commitment to change must be long-term.

CHALLENGE:

Promote a comprehensive system of outcome–based education in all of Minnesota's schools.

The seeds for outcome–based education (OBE) were planted by the Minnesota State Legislature in the mid–1970s, with the Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting (PER) process. Initially, that process required districts to establish learner goals. By 1987, the Minnesota State Legislature directed the State Board of Education to adopt a set of "essential learner outcomes" to be used as a basis for the accountability portion of the PER legislation. Minnesota's outcome–based education, part of a larger national movement, prescribes content in terms of what students need to know, rather than relying on predetermined course syllabi that prescribes what is to be taught.

This process encourages each student to achieve personal learning goals and master outcomes in a subject area. It is intended to allow students to progress at their own pace through the curriculum, rather than relying on traditional "clock hours" and "seat time" to gauge progress. The goal of outcome–based education is to develop an integrated curriculum in which student learning is focused on thinking, reasoning, problem–solving, and integrating knowledge. Students must leave the educational system able to apply what they have learned in everyday family, work, and community situations. A kindergarten through competence system must evolve.

Outcome–based education presumes that all students can learn and succeed, that success breeds success, and schools help control the conditions for the success. Establishing the necessary conditions to enable all learners the opportunity to succeed is complex and challenging. This year, Minnesota school districts will be required to adopt plans for developing learner outcomes. We strongly encourage school districts to fully adopt outcome–based education as a means for addressing the needs of all learners, at all levels of the educational system.

36. Develop personalized learning plans for all students.

A personalized learning plan should be developed for all students in Minnesota. Minnesota's outcome based education policies are intended to recognize the individual strengths and talents of each student by tailoring assessment, curriculum, and instruction to their individual needs. To this end, a personalized learning plan that identifies the student's specific academic and personal goals should be developed. Increasing parental involvement in the development of these plans is essential.

37. Establish statewide graduation standards that reflect living and working competencies relevant for the 21st century.

Minnesota is currently developing new statewide graduation standards. New policies need to focus on outcomes learned by students, rather than on course requirements. Students must leave our schools with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for employment, further education, family life, and responsible citizenship.

38. Emphasize continuous assessment and feedback of student progress in the curriculum.

Assessment and feedback is an essential component of Minnesota's outcome-based education policies. Assessment information must be used in designing personalized learning plans, improving instruction, and modifying curricula. We encourage local school districts to adopt assessment procedures at the district level for gathering data regarding student progress toward learner goals and toward program and unit-level learner outcomes. Each school and teacher should also develop assessment procedures for determining student progress toward course and lesson outcomes.

CHALLENGE:

Develop varied and flexible interdisciplinary and cooperative instructional strategies that address the diversity of individual student learning needs.

Student-teacher interactions and classroom instruction play a significant role in improving educational outcomes among students. Research on effective schools shows that student achievement is most attributable to: (1) positive teacher attitudes toward students and positive expectations regarding their ability to master the curriculum; (2) flexibility in the manner in which students are grouped and assigned learning tasks; (3) careful monitoring of progress toward goals through student testing and staff evaluation programs; (4) strong parent involvement programs; and (5) consistent emphasis on the importance of academic achievement, including praise and public recognition for students' accomplishments (Good & Brophy, 1986).

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39. Treat the years between kindergarten and the end of third grade (K-3) as a learning block.

Treating the first four years of a child's education as a learning block can help children to achieve expected basic skills and social competencies. There are several benefits of this approach. First, more opportunities may exist for teachers to work in teams to address student needs. Use of teams allow improved coordination of the curriculum to match instruction to the young learner's needs across teachers and grade levels. Second, opportunities for developing flexible instructional groupings, testing procedures, and, most importantly, a curriculum appropriate to the child's age and life experiences can more readily occur. We encourage local schools to re-

structure the curriculum and treat the K-3 years as a learning block. This, we believe, is an important strategy in preventing academic, social, and emotional difficulties that may arise during a child's latter school experiences.

40. Help students to make successful transitions between school programs.

The transitions from early childhood to kindergarten, elementary school to middle and junior high programs, and eventually onto high school are stressful for students as well as for parents. Helping students and parents during these transitions is essential in easing tensions and, in some cases, is needed to assure students don't fall through the cracks. We strongly encourage local school districts to adopt formal procedures that help students and their families make successful transitions between school programs. School counselors, social workers, nurses, teachers, and administrators all need to be involved in this process.

41. Eliminate unnecessary ability grouping, segregation, and tracking of students caused by inflexible categorical program regulations and policies.

Minnesota must revise current regulatory and reimbursement policies that limit opportunities for educators to develop meaningful and cost-effective team approaches in teaching students with special learning needs. Educators must work toward creating an "inclusive" system in which needless labeling, isolation and segregation of students is eliminated. Believing in every child's ability to learn is a powerful means of showing youth the respect they want and deserve from educators.

42. Emphasize multicultural, gender-fair, and disability-awareness (inclusive) perspectives in the curriculum.

We must ensure that students leaving our schools are empowered with the tools needed to create a society that values and promotes equity and equality for all citizens. Minnesota has mandated that the curriculum must enable all students to learn about the cultural diversity of the United States and the contemporary and historical contributions of women, men, people of color, and persons with disabilities to society. We encourage local school districts to incorporate these basic premises and values when developing learner outcomes for all Minnesota students. Districts and the state must recognize that achieving equity and the full inclusion of all students may require unequal distribution of resources.

CHALLENGE:

Promote responsible citizenship through experiential learning opportunities in all communities in Minnesota.

Community and neighborhood service helps students to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the importance of education in achieving important social goals in communities. The benefits of neighborhood and community service are far-reaching.

Community service placements help students to develop such generic employability skills as teamwork, ability to follow directions, accepting supervision, responsibility, and punctuality.

43. Increase community service and youth development opportunities for all students.

Given the benefits of youth community service in enriching students' understanding of responsible citizenship, we strongly encourage local school districts to expand these service opportunities to students statewide. We also encourage schools to develop and expand planned mentoring programs for students.

CHALLENGE:

Provide students increased options in choosing when, where, and how they learn, in order to increase Minnesota's high school graduation rate.

Strategies for improving the state's education climate to prevent students from dropping out have been under development statewide. Efforts to improve collaboration among educators, community service agencies as well as employers in helping dropouts to overcome barriers necessary to re-enter school are also being undertaken. Accommodating students' diverse learning needs and personal situations by way of flexible program options is necessary. Many students need to balance outside family and work responsibilities with their goal of earning a high school diploma. Area learning centers, vocational education, and alternative education programs all play a critical role in reducing dropout rates among students.

44. Create learning climates in regular high school programs that are flexible and responsive to individual student needs.

Legislation supporting the development of Area Learning Centers and alternative education programs represents two major components of Minnesota's ongoing efforts to reduce Minnesota's dropout rate. These programs promote flexibility as well as diversity in the range of programs and services offered to students. For example, Area Learning Centers

operate year-round and maintain day and evening school schedules. These programs also offer smaller class sizes, more individual attention, specialized counseling and tutoring, and maintain collaborative relationships with a broad range of community health and social service agencies that support students during their educational program. All services are geared toward promoting a positive learning environment in which students experience success. Minnesota's high schools must become responsive to a wider range of student needs by creating more flexibility in the programs they offer.

45. Provide diverse and responsive educational options that encourage students to remain in school and assist individuals who have left school to re-enter and complete a high school program.

Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options and High School Graduation Incentives programs provide meaningful educational options for students statewide. We strongly encourage school districts to take full advantage of Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, High School Graduation Incentives program, Area Learning Centers, and other alternative education programs to reduce Minnesota's dropout rate and to encourage those who have left early to return and complete their high school diploma.

CHALLENGE:

Improve the school to adult life transition for all our youth.

For most youth, the transition from high school to postsecondary education, employment, and community living is relatively smooth. The hoped for dreams of college, a good career and family life come true for most of our students in Minnesota. Nonetheless, the transition from high school can be a traumatic and frustrating experience for some of our young people. Unfortunately, a "sink or swim" attitude toward what follows the high school years prevails in much of our thinking.

The transition from school is particularly difficult for young people with disabilities. Unassisted, many of these students fail to make needed connections to postsecondary education, employment, and community service programs. National unemployment rates among adults with disabilities currently range between 50 percent and 75 percent (U.S. Office of Civil Rights, 1983).

In the United States, students and parents almost always assume exclusive responsibility for the transition from schools. Schools are beginning to help, but much more needs to be done. Students and their families need good information on the availability of post-school services and opportunities and help in planning for these services. Schools must play a more active role in assisting students during this critical period of post-school adjustment.

46. Promote career development and lifelong learning opportunities for students while still in school.

We must teach what work is about and what skills, basic knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors are needed to succeed in the working world, family, and community life. We strongly recommend that local school districts review their current programs in regular education, vocational education, and special education to assure that these programs convey the skills needed by youth in making the transition from school to postsecondary education, employment, and meaningful family and community life. Schools must take an active role in better preparing students for the future.

GOAL FIVE

Lifelong Learning

Provide adults with educational opportunities which lead to literacy and economic independence.

About 23 million adults are functionally illiterate in America today, and another 47 million are marginally illiterate. The Minnesota Interagency Adult Literacy Policy Group concluded a year-long study of the state's education needs and priorities in 1988. The policy group estimated that 355,000 Minnesotans between the ages of 18 and 64 had not yet completed high school, and another 200,000 of adult Minnesotans who had graduated from high school were estimated to have basic skills below the eighth grade level. About 210,000 of these adults were recommended as primary targets for adult education.

CHALLENGE:

Meet the educational needs of a diverse adult population, regardless of age, national origin, or prior educational level.

Today, more adults seek to train for new careers, improve their literacy skills, and retrain to meet new skill demands and requirements in their current jobs. Minnesota's current system of education and training for adults is a patch-work of publicly and privately funded services. It includes a major system of technical colleges, community colleges, Adult Basic Education and literacy programs, four-year institutions of higher education, diploma eligibility for those age 21 and over, and a range of private trade and business schools. Funding for these programs is as diverse as are the types of programs available. Several programs are targeted to specific population groups (e.g., non-English speaking, academically and economically disadvantaged, corrections inmates, refugees, and handicapped).

Programs such as intergenerational and family literacy, workplace literacy, early childhood family education, and parent education programs are important components of a comprehensive statewide system of adult education and lifelong learning. Further, the current number of educational programs for Minnesota adults needs to be expanded statewide to keep pace with the growing demand. We strongly encourage the Minnesota State Legislature to work closely with those state and local agencies responsible for the development of adult educational programs to make available additional programs and services.

47. Create parity in the system of adult and lifelong learning programs in Minnesota.

The instability and uncertainty of annual program-based funding currently hampers the adult education system in planning comprehensive services for its growing clientele. Student funding levels should move to parity with K-12 programs for basic aids, transportation, staff compensation and capital costs. We strongly encourage the Minnesota State Legislature to review the program and funding inequities found between Minnesota's K-12 and adult education systems and create parity to support the education, training and lifelong learning of the growing number of adults who need and are seeking such learning opportunities statewide.

CHALLENGE:

Improve participation of adults of color, immigrants, and persons with disabilities in adult education and lifelong learning programs in Minnesota.

People of color and recent immigrants are a significant and growing proportion of all adults presently involved in Minnesota's adult education programs. Young adults with disabilities also increasingly seek access to adult education and training opportunities. Access to adult education programs has been problematic for adults with disabilities, and participation rates overall remain low. Persons of color and non-English speaking immigrants experience difficulties in successfully completing programs. Dropout rates among these individuals are high.

48. Improve access and create equity in the adult education system.

No significant attempt has been made to develop appropriate staffing, curriculum, and learning strategies for Minnesota's multicultural and disabled citizens. Community-level programs all need assistance in this area. Further, increased recruitment of instructors and support staff who themselves represent the cultural and racial diversity of the adult student population must occur. Program policies must be systematically reviewed statewide to assure that equity and quality in the delivery of services become the foundation of a state system of postsecondary education for all adults in Minnesota. We encourage local school districts, and the boards of public and private adult education and training programs, to review their policies, program strategies and funding patterns to create an equitable system that provides the access and encourages the participation of all adults in Minnesota. We further encourage the Minnesota State Legislature to help create the financial incentives necessary to assure the full participation of low income individuals in programs statewide.

CONCLUSION

This report represents the results of discussions and meetings conducted throughout Minnesota during the past year with educational leaders, local school district representatives, state health and social service agencies, and students and families. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support, as well as the sense of urgency, conveyed by these groups in moving forward with a comprehensive action agenda that creates a statewide educational environment in which all students can succeed.

Challenge 2000 is a vision of change for the 21st century and beyond. The vision conveyed in this report is a collective one, shaped through the input and contributions of many Minnesotans. It calls for a fundamental restructuring of the very way in which schools are operated, young people are taught, and parents and community members become actively involved in educational planning and decision making. The one force that has sustained the nation through periods of trouble as well as triumph has been the power of education. We have reached a critical point where public education must come to grips with the realization that far too many of our young people are not faring well in our schools. We must revitalize the power of education in fostering a statewide educational environment in which all students succeed. The door to every child's future success and prosperity is first and foremost the door to the schoolhouse. The way must be paved with responsive education policies and programs, and we must act now.

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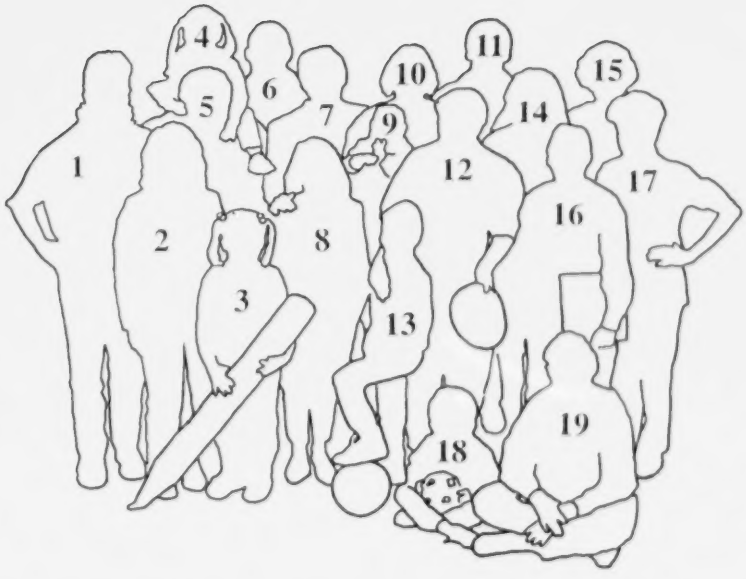
Minnesota Department of Education



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